

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SNM-05
AID-05 OMB-01 SS-15 SP-02 /058 W
-----011372 040609Z /11

R 031535Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7781
INFO USCINCO QUARRY HTS CZ
JCS WASHDC //J-5//
CNO WASHDC //OP-61//

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 4145

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, SNAR, CO
SUBJ: JOINT US-COLOMBIAN STUDY

1. IN OCT 1977, COMMANDER OF COLOMBIAN NAVY RECOMMENDED TO US CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS THE CONDUCT OF A JOINT STUDY TO DETERMINE COLOMBIA'S NEEDS FOR AN IMPROVED COASTAL SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY. IN EARLY MARCH I ADVISED INFO ADDRESSES OF MY CONCURRENCE IN THIS STUDY EFFORT STIPULATING THAT THE US TEAM SHOULD BE HEADED BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF CNO OR CINCLANTFLT.

2. THE WILLINGNESS OF THE COLOMBIAN NAVY TO UNDERTAKE THIS STUDY REFLECTS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE PRIMARY THRUST OF THEIR TRADITIONAL EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE A DEEP WATER NAVY, A RECOGNITION OF THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF THEIR COASTAL AREAS AND THE APPROACHES TO THE PANAMA CANAL. I STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS EFFORT ALONG WITH A CONCURRENT DECREASE IN EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A MORE CONVENTIONAL DEEP WATER NAVY. IT IS TIME TO RECOGNIZE THAT COLOMBIA DOES NOT HAVE AN EFFECTIVE NAVAL FORCE AND BARRING SOME UNEXPECTED FINANCIAL WINDFALL OF CONSIDERABLE MAGNITUDE, THEY WILL NOT HAVE ONE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. FOR THIS REASON I ENCOURAGE
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ANY MOVE WHICH WILL CURTAIL THE EXPENDITURE OF LIMITED RESOURCES TOWARDS THE ATTAINMENT OF AN IMPOSSIBLE GOAL AND INSTEAD, DIVERT THESE RESOURCES TOWARDS A REASONABLE OBJECTIVE WHICH WILL SUPPORT BOTH COLOMBIAN AND US INTERESTS.

3. I AM ANXIOUS THAT THE JOINT COLOMBIAN US STUDY GET UNDERWAY AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. MY INTEREST IS TWO-

FOLD. I SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN THE COLOMBIAN NAVY IN A ROLE WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO THE DEFENSE OF THE PANAMA CANAL. I ALSO SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEANINGFUL CAPABILITY WHICH CAN BE EMPLOYED IN EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF COASTAL ACTIVITIES TO INCLUDE CONTRABAND AND NARCOTICS.

4. I HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY MY MILGP COMMANDER THAT THERE IS A FUNDING PROBLEM WHICH IS DELAYING THE INITIATION OF THIS EFFORT. I REALIZE THAT WE ARE IN A PERIOD OF FISCAL AUSTERITY BUT WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THIS STUDY IS A MATTER OF MUTUAL US-COLOMBIAN INTEREST. THE STUDY SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER WHICH IS OF PRIMARY BENEFIT TO COLOMBIA -- IT WILL SERVE BOTH NATIONS AND WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY OUR EXPENSES AND THE COLOMBIANS, THEIRS.

5. WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS STUDY THERE WILL BE A REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL HARDWARE AND SERVICES ON THE PART OF THE COLOMBIAN NAVY. THEY WILL MOST PROBABLY LOOK TO US FOR ASSISTANCE IN THIS MATTER. TO THE EXTENT THAT THIS EFFORT CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY TO US NATIONAL INTERESTS, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT IT IN TERMS OF INCREASED FMS CREDITS AND IMET MONEY WHICH WOULD BE SPECIFICALLY EAR-MARKED FOR THIS PROJECT. CONCURRENTLY WE SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE WILL NOT SUPPORT EFFORTS TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CONVENTIONAL DEEP-WATER

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NAVY. THIS IS OF COURSE A DELICATE MATTER, AND I INTEND TO APPROACH THE SUBJECT WITH THAT FACT IN MIND IN MY DELIBERATIONS WITH THE COMMANDER OF THE COLOMBIAN NAVY AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE. I WILL MAKE NO COMMITMENTS FOR ASSISTANCE, BUT WILL EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT FISCAL REALITIES -- IN BOTH THE US AND COLOMBIA -- MAKE IT NECESSARY TO CHOOSE BETWEEN COASTAL CONTROL OF A CONVENTIONAL NAVY. IN THIS RESPECT, MEMBERS OF ANY US TEAM WHICH WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE NEED TO DISCOURAGE ANY EFFORT TO ACQUIRE A CAPABILITY GREATER THAN COASTAL SURVEILLANCE AND MUST GUARD AGAINST ANY TENDENCY TO RECOMMEND THE ACQUISITION OF MORE COSTLY ITEMS THAT COULD BE USED IN A DUAL PURPOSE ROLE.

6. IN SUMMARY, I STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS STUDY EFFORT AND RECOMMEND THAT IT BE INITIATED AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. AS AN INITIAL EFFORT I RECOMMEND THAT AFTER EXCHANGE OF COORDINATING CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE CHIEFS OF BOTH NAVIES, THAT A SMALL GROUP OF OFFICERS MEET HERE IN BOGOTA TO DEFINE THE PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY. THIS GROUP SHOULD INCLUDE A SENIOR OFFICER OF THE US NAVY AND A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USCG. WITH THE LIKELY CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NAVY

AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN JUNE, THE NEED TO GATHER MOMENTUM AND
COMMITMENT BEFORE THAT DATE IS CRITICAL. ASECIO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, SURVEILLANCE, DRUG TRAFFIC, NAVAL FORCES, STUDIES, COASTAL WATERWAYS, BORDER CONTROLS, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BOGOTA04145
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780189-1092
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780599/aaaadgqu.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 902fb2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2810398
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JOINT US-COLOMBIAN STUDY
TAGS: MARR, MASS, SNAR, CO, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/902fb2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014